

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Wyoming Marks December 1 as World AIDS Day

The Wyoming Department of Health is teaming up with representatives from Laramie County Community College, Casper College, Sheridan College, Western Wyoming Community College, local public health offices, family planning clinics and several community-based organizations across the state to recognize December 1 as World AIDS Day.

With a theme this year of “New Decade, New Dedication,” World AIDS Day is designed to focus attention on prevention, treatment, care and support for persons at risk and living with HIV/AIDS.

“The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) attacks the body’s immune system. And, although there is no cure, current medications can help many people infected with HIV live longer and healthier lives,” said Rob Johnston, HIV prevention program manager with the Wyoming Department of Health.

Johnston said the virus is most commonly spread in Wyoming by sexual contact or by sharing needles or other injection equipment with an infected person. Babies born to HIV-infected women may become infected before or during birth or through breast-feeding after birth.

“We want people need to remember that HIV is 100 percent preventable with some common-sense precautions,” Johnston said.

According to the department, it is estimated that more than 200 persons are living with HIV in Wyoming with about 20 new infections reported this year.

Wyoming residents are encouraged to know their HIV status. “About a fifth of HIV-infected people are unaware they have it,” Johnston explained. “It’s believed that those persons are possibly responsible for half of new infections.”

Testing sites are located throughout the state, and in most cases, people can be tested at no cost to themselves. “Many sites now offer rapid testing,” Johnston said. “That allows preliminary results to be available in less than 20 minutes.”

The Wyoming Department of Health also offers a website designed to provide reliable information on STD’s, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and unintended pregnancies. The site provides current statistical information and scenarios related to STD’s/HIV/AIDS/hepatitis and unintended pregnancy to educate those newly diagnosed and those interested in learning more. For more information, visit <http://www.getthei.com>.

For details on World AIDS Day activities around the state or testing locations, call Johnston at 307-237-2044, 307-777-6563 or toll free at 1-800-438-1282.

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